

Eyelids

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Summary: Prompt: "Sleeping together. Hushed breathing and feather-light touches when one wakes before the other. Rolling over and unconsciously curling closer into each other because even when they sleep, they are in love." Jesus/Daryl. 3rd person. Oneshot. Post-canon, presently canon-compliant. Or: how I could see Jeryl becoming canon.

Eyelids

****a/n****: i made a new tumblr dedicated to TWD and for all of my fanfiction! if anyone is interested, it's [thatismygvn](https://www.tumblr.com/thatismygvn). that said, the title and quote come from the song "Eyelids" by the group Pvriss and i highly recommend you guys listen to the empty room session version posted by riserecords. then watch the official music video because it has beautiful queer women and it's basically just a beautiful video for a beautiful song about a long-distance relationship. not that that has anything to do with this fic.

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><p>"I felt your hands in my hair I felt your breath on my neck / Yeah, I need to feel you again."

Sleep was something you found if you were lucky. Peaceful sleep was a true rarity.

Daryl lived with his demons through every moment of his day, waking or otherwise. With every blink he saw the ghosts of the lost ones - Hershel with a knowing look in his eyes as he sat on his knees between Michonne and the Governor, Beth with a smile on her face as she walked across that hallway. Every shut eye meant another reliving of the worst days of his life - being relieved of his blindfold only to find himself in a cage match with Merle after he'd already come to terms with losing him, or going back to Woodbury only to see him eating on the innards of his former allies with red where his eyes

should've been white and blood dripping down his chin.

No one ever asked him why he didn't sleep much, especially on the road. They never could get past their own exhaustion to wonder why Daryl never seemed to be plagued by it. But in Alexandria, there was simply no further need for him to be the round-the-clock watchman. The walls held. The guards had their system. Daryl, with his quick and unpredictable temper, was the last person they would consider keeping on post, and so he was forced to stop, to take a breather. To rest.

The biggest challenge he faced when he finally had the time to worry about himself was that with that extra time came extra opportunities to dwell on his insecurities. He had time to step out of his comfort zone and grow attached to more people only to watch them be taken from right in front of him. Soon his eyes shut and he saw Denise alongside Beth, with her nervous smile and understanding eyes that tore at his facade. When he laid down at night, he watched his own bolt strike through her brain immediately following the bullet exploding from Beth's skull.

He wasn't sure when it was that Jesus began spending more nights in Alexandria than his own home at Hilltop. He didn't understand why the man lingered so closely to him, in and around the house Daryl was assigned, the house he never used except to sit on the roof when the nights were too loud and his mind was too busy to be cooped up inside the walls. He wasn't sure when he started letting the man trail him or when he started talking to him or when he started liking him. The change happened so gradually that by the time he realized he felt as fiercely protective over Jesus as he did over Rick or Carol or Judith, he could do nothing to stop it. Even the terror in the back of his mind over the idea of losing the exuberant man wasn't enough to make Daryl keep his distance.

The fact of the matter was that Jesus could see past the mask Daryl put up for his fellow community members. He laughed and joked to take Daryl's mind away from the demons that haunted him but in the privacy of their home he was quiet and perceptive, gauging the level of Daryl's fear that he knew he would never show. He would sit down beside Daryl's door when the other man finally laid down to sleep to wait the hour or two it would take for him to start whimpering, muttering unfamiliar names under his breath. Jesus would rustle him enough to shake him out of his nightmare with a glass of water before sitting by the pillows and pulling Daryl's head into his lap, weaving his fingers through sweat-damp hair.

They never talked about these instances, though they became part of their nightly routines. Daryl eventually found Jesus's feather-light fingers to be as reassuring as Carol's just after Merle's murder. He found himself pressing his back against Jesus's denim-bound legs before he fell back asleep, and Jesus began simply going to bed with Daryl, resting with his body propped up against the headboard and his fingers still splayed over Daryl's head.

It was Daryl who gruffly pulled him down onto the pillows first, startling the bearded man who watched with wide aqua eyes as Daryl turned around and mumbled through paper-thin sheets, "â€| ain't gonna be the reason you got back problems, sleepin' up against that wall." With a small smile on his lips Jesus nestled himself in the dip of the mattress, pressing his cotton-clad back against Daryl's plaid.

When the nightmares began to course through Daryl, Jesus found it easier to turn onto his other side and wrap his arms around his broad shoulders, his fingers rubbing circles over Daryl's chest, pressing his forehead against Daryl's shoulder blade, knowing all too well how sensitive Daryl was to the area and the barely-healed scar that went there.

If anyone noticed the arrangement, no one asked about it. Perhaps a few exchanged knowing glances with one another when Jesus and Daryl sat on their roof, splitting cigarettes and staring at the sky, but no one made any comments to them or to one another. It was understood that everyone had their own ways to cope and to heal, even if some of these methods were unknown to others.

To those who traveled with Daryl, to Rick and to Glenn and to Carol, the impact of having Jesus around Daryl was staggering. They watched the lines around his eyes ease and the grimace on his face give way to lopsided smirks. His shoulders seemed to relax, as if the weight that seemed omnipresent melted away over the time that Jesus stayed with them.

They didn't have a word for what exactly their relationship had become, but it became clear that Daryl, at least, could not function without the other man's calming presence. The few evenings Daryl spent alone when Jesus was forced to return to Hilltop were among the worst he'd ever had in Alexandria. He spent more time yelling himself awake than actually finding a moment's worth of peaceful sleep the first night alone, and decided he would spend the rest of the time he should've been sleeping in Aaron and Eric's garage, laboring over and under the motorcycle he worried would never run again.

When Daryl trudged to his room after his third sleepless day to see Jesus lounging against the pillows with a tattered book in his hands, he stopped in the doorway with his arms crossed tightly over his chest. "When'd you get back?"

And Jesus would lift his eyes to look at Daryl, his gaze lingering on the puffy bags under his eyes, on the hard set of his jaw, and he dropped his book on the mattress before Daryl waved him down and crossed the floor to fall onto the bed, laying on his back as he looked up at Jesus's anxious eyes.

"You look like shit," Jesus told him, and Daryl snorted before picking up the abandoned paperback.

He flipped through the pages lazily but handed it back to Jesus as he flipped onto his side. "Keep reading," he murmured, his eyelids fluttering shut. "I wanna listen to you."

With his eyes closed, Jesus smiled at Daryl. No, he didn't know what they were to one another. He wasn't even quite sure they could be anything to one another. But as he continued back where he left off, breezing through one chapter to the next, he listened to Daryl's breathing even out, watched as his chest rose and fell with each passing moment. After only thirty minutes, Jesus set the book down and crawled towards the foot of the bed where he began to untie the strings around Daryl's pant-legs and unlace his heavy boots. Just as he draped a blanket over Daryl's body, he felt firm fingers grip his wrist.

"Lay with me," Daryl muttered, his voice thick with sleep. Then, quieter, sounding almost like a plea: " â€| don't go."

Jesus looked at him with knit brows as Daryl opened his reddened eyes. "Can't sleep without you, Man," he admitted with a forced nonchalance. Nodding, Jesus returned to the bed and laid on his side, facing Daryl. He watched the man for several seconds before giving in to the smile that teased at his lips. Slowly, he released his wrist from Daryl's lax grip and clutched his fingers in his own before pressing his lips to the back of his scarred hand.

"I'm not going anywhere," he promised quietly.

End
file.